

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, Members of the Committee.

Testimony presented by Deborah Foster, LCSW

January 31, 2007

My name is Deborah Foster. I live in Middletown and have worked for many years with people who have severe and chronic mental illness. I am in private practice in Guilford and I also do contract work for Gateway Counseling Services in Essex. I am speaking in support of SB-1.

We have been "penny wise and pound foolish." Our healthcare funding strategies neglect problems when they may most easily be solved.

Several years ago I worked with an individual who had grown up malnourished and neglected. This person developed a deformation of the jaw. It not only caused pain, it was also so unsightly that the person experienced repeated traumas. Bullied as a child, this person chose abusive relationships and suffered severe depression. While the individual was considered disabled and surgery was available, nothing could be done because orthodontia would be needed prior to treatment. Even in these tragic circumstances the most essential treatment could not be offered under available healthcare coverage.

Recently I began working with a man on parole after several years in prison due to recurrent drunk driving. He came out with a determination to maintain his sobriety. He came faithfully to his appointments, attended AA and struggled to maintain his sobriety. When he feared he would falter he turned to our psychiatrist who prescribed him a new medication designed to reduce the cravings he was feeling. He took the prescription to the pharmacy and discovered it was not something his SAGA coverage would pay for. He could not afford it on his laborer's pay.

I had a checkup the other day and told my doctor I would be here to speak with you and asked her if she had had any experiences with people on Medicaid who had not received the care they needed. She answered that her practice didn't have very many people on Medicaid.